

I have thus given a summary of the principal results of my investigations, and shall only add that in the first part of my last treatise I have endeavoured to maintain my diagnosis of *Miastor* in opposition to Schiner, Siebold, and Loew. Whatever might appear to be remarkable in the fact that *Miastor* had only four joints in the tarsi and two joints in the palpi, vanishes before the circumstance that *Oligarces* has only two joints in the tarsi, and possesses no palpi at all.—*Ann. Sci. Nat.* sér. 5. tome vi. pp. 16–18.

*A Last Remark on the Generic Name Potamogale.*

By Dr. A. GÜNTHER.

Dr. Gray, in a note "On the Use of the Genus *Potamogale*," published in the preceding Number of this Journal, p. 426, refers to the following remark, in which I had expressed my view on the same subject:—"Since he [Dr. Gray] has adopted the specific name of *velox*, given by Du Chaillu at the same time [as *Potamogale*], and as in this case the generic and specific names refer to the same individual specimen, succeeding naturalists have no other choice but to recognize or to reject both alike" (*Zool. Record*, ii. p. 33). He states that "the latter observation is incorrect," and "that the generic name of *Potamogale* and the specific one of *velox* do not rest on the same basis."

By this time all zoologists interested in the subject must be so fully acquainted with the history of this case, that the matter might have been safely left where it stands; however, as Dr. Gray says that I had come to this conclusion "on a very imperfect recollection of his paper," I must add a few words in further explanation.

In questions of this kind I am guided by a rule which is adopted by the majority of naturalists, viz. that "a name which has never been clearly defined in some published work should be changed for the earliest name by which the object shall have been so defined." Accordingly I asked myself, would it have been possible for a zoologist like Dr. Bocage or Prof. Allman to recognize *Potamogale* from Du Chaillu's original description, if the typical specimen (a mutilated skin, without skull) had been lost. I thought, and am still inclined to think, that identification would have been, for these zoologists, impossible or at least a matter of uncertainty, and therefore, that the first binomial name given by one of them should have superseded that proposed by Du Chaillu. In this respect I am so fortunate as to agree with Dr. Gray when he says, "M. du Chaillu's description of the *Cynogale velox* is so incorrect that, if the skin had not fortunately come into the possession of the British Museum, the animal must have remained . . . one of the puzzles of zoologists" (*this Journal*, 1865, xvi. p. 426). For this reason I was and am still of opinion that both names might have been rejected alike, and that a new *binomial* name given by Dr. Gray would have been upheld by all naturalists adhering to the rule quoted above.

But in his last note Dr. Gray states, "The animal is described in

the paper (of M. du Chaillu), with some details, under the name of *Cynogale velox*, quite sufficiently, especially when one has the type specimen to confirm the description, to establish the specific name of *velox*." Although this may appear, at first sight, a contradiction of the previous passage, it is not so in reality, as in the first Dr. Gray argues on the assumption of the possible loss of the type specimen, and in the second this specimen is admitted as an essential item in the consideration of the matter. If the description, with the addition of the type specimen, be sufficient to establish the fact that the animal is swift, and therefore to justify the specific *velox*, that description with the type specimen was alike sufficient to establish the fact that it was a river-animal, and therefore to justify the generic *Potamogale*; for if a —*mys* be admitted as a generic name for a carnivorous animal, a —*gale* cannot be rejected for a suspected Rodent. Dr. Gray draws a line of distinction between the part of Du Chaillu's description referring to the species and that referring to the genus. I need not quote the passage again in which Du Chaillu justifies his proposal of the genus *Potamogale*: however unfortunate his comparison with *Cynogale* may have been, it implied at least that it was a *carnivorous* mammal; and he appealed to *the shape and proportion of the tail* and its *West-African habitat*. Surely many a generic name proposed and adopted by naturalists has been introduced into the system with less accurate elements of a generic diagnosis! Look, on the other hand, at his detailed description of the species *Cynogale velox*: it contains all those errors pointed out by Dr. Gray; nay, it is even perfectly insufficient as a *specific* description, such descriptions requiring considerable detail to ensure the distinction of a species from its congeners. If the type specimen had been lost, a succeeding naturalist, who might have recognized the genus *Potamogale*, would still have been at a loss to know whether he had to deal with the same species or not. And yet, although the chances of a recognition would have been more in favour of the generic than of the specific name, Dr. Gray prefers to use his advantage of having the type specimen for confirming the description and name of the species, rather than that of the genus. It was for these reasons that I stated my opinion that if one name be adopted, the other cannot be rejected; and for these same reasons I now state that the *generic name* has (on the merits of the original description alone) a better right to be adopted than the specific.

If zoologists should ever unite in the proposed revision of the "rules of zoological nomenclature," I shall not regret having been forced to this discussion, which may induce them to give a share of their attention to cases like the present.